The Collection

I collect weight slips. You know, those pieces of paper, churned out by the digital scales, in Boots and Superdrug. The ones that tell you your actual, and allegedly “ideal”, body weights.

I've got hundreds, literally. I keep them in the old biscuit tins, which Mum lets me have “for storage” - although she, of course, has no idea what I *actually* “store” in them. I don't always wash the tins out properly, and will often come across crumbs, which I find strangely comforting, in an almost masochistic way.

We've a pair of scales in the bathroom, but I don't use them much, as they're not accurate enough, for my purposes. It's the ones in chemists, and the local sports' centre, that I'm addicted to.

I know. “Addiction” is a strong word, isn't it? But that's what it is. It's not that different, in many ways, to being hooked on the slot machines, in amusement arcades. It's a buzz. Every time I stand on those scales, I experience the familiar rush of anticipation, mixed up with panic.

A couple of years ago, when I clutched, in damp, shaky hands, the unopened envelope, containing my GCSE results – that's about the closest anything has come to...

No, I tell a lie. *That* wasn't the closest. The best example would have to be the time I showed up at my boyfriend, Danny's, twenty-first. The party I hadn't been supposed to know about.

The party at which I caught my “boyfriend”, examining the state of my elder sister, Sophie's, tonsils.

I'm looking for my “seven stone three”. That's my “record”, to date. I've only got the one, even though I've got two “seven-fours”, and thirty-four “seven-fives”.

Try not to panic, girl. It has to be here somewhere.

“Laura, are you nearly ready?” yells my mother. “We need to be off soon!”

“Just coming, Mum!”

I examine my reflection, in the full-length mirror. Hair and make-up both passable, I assure myself. But do I look fat in this dress, or what?

Not sure what I'm dreading most about this wedding. The reception afterwards? All that phenomenally calorific food, and every single relative I barely knew I *had*, conspiring to ensure that I actually eat some of it?

A great aunt or two will probably follow me into the loo – just to make sure I don't...Yes, well. You get my drift. So, is that the worst part, then?

Or is it the bitter irony of watching my sister get married to the bloke, for whom I spent three entire years starving, puking, and stepping on scales?

Watching our Sophie, walking up the aisle, looking totally gorgeous, in her long, ivory, Size Sixteen wedding dress.